

THE DIAL

A Semi-Monthly Journal of Literary Criticism, Discussion, and Information.

THE DIAL (founded in 1880) is published on the 1st and 16th of each month. TERMS OF SUBSCRIPTION, \$2. a year in advance, postage prepaid in the United States, and Mexico; Foreign and Canadian postage 50 cents per year extra. REMITTANCES should be by check, or by express or postal order, payable to THE DIAL COMPANY. Unless otherwise ordered, subscriptions will begin with the current number. When no direct request to discontinue at expiration of subscription is received, it is assumed that a continuance of the subscription is desired. ADVERTISING RATES furnished on application. All communications should be addressed to

THE DIAL, Fine Arts Building, Chicago.

Entered as Second-Class Matter October 8, 1892, at the Post Office at Chicago, Illinois, under Act of March 3, 1879.

No. 544. FEBRUARY 16, 1909. Vol. XLVI.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
LINCOLN	101
EDGAR ALLAN POE: A CENTENARY OUT-LOOK. Warren Barton Blake	103
CASUAL COMMENT	105
The weighing and measuring of genius.—The fascinating problem of the origin of language.—A library on wheels.—An early portrait of Chaucer.—The next lecturer before the Alliance Française.—Sweetness and light in the reading-room.—Litter and literature.—The progress of spelling-reform.—Dr. Osler as chief speaker at the coming library dedication.—A useful Lincoln bibliography.	
COMMUNICATIONS	108
Tennyson and "The Quarterly Review." Albert H. Tolman.	
The Carnegie Institution and Literature. S. Weir Mitchell.	
Another Literary Seedsman. Charles Welsh.	
REMINISCENCES OF A NOTED WOMAN. George Robert Sparks	108
SIR SPENCER WALPOLE AS HISTORIAN. Ephraim D. Adams	110
THE STORY OF HERCULANEUM. G. J. Laing	112
LETTERS OF THE WIFE OF A GREAT POLITICAL LEADER. W. H. Johnson	114
BRIEFS ON NEW BOOKS	115
Essays by Thackeray's daughter.—Short studies in medical biography.—The building of a great State in the Northwest.—Some simple annals of the poor.—Dolls and doll-lore.—A colleague's tribute to Carla Wenckebach.—Backward glances of a veteran educator.—A fascinating page of Greek history.—A history of the Philippines.—A Lincoln centennial souvenir.	
NOTES	118
LIST OF NEW BOOKS	119

LINCOLN.

Nearly forty-four years have passed since that "startled April morning" when the word went forth from Washington that our great President was no more. For close upon half a century he has been numbered among the small company of immortals who "sit with their peers above the talk," and the fitness of the words, "Now he belongs to the ages," spoken by Stanton in the hushed chamber when the assassin's victim had drawn his last breath, are now perhaps just beginning to be realized. This centennial year of Lincoln's birth has rightly been singled out to signalize his achievements, and still more to emphasize the value of the example offered by his life and character. The record of his words and deeds has long been, and will long remain, one of the chief springs upon which our national idealism is fed; and purer waters never flowed into the current of a people's life.

Those of us whose lives overlapped his, whether we ever saw him in the flesh or not, have a sense of personal possession in which the younger generation cannot share. Even if we have nothing more than childish recollections of the tragic day of his death, of the awed silence that surrounded us when the tidings came, and of the grief that might be expressed in sobs but not in words, we have a memory that has grown precious as it has become chastened, and that makes Lincoln in very truth a part of our own lives. No one can ever quite efface from consciousness the very real distinction between past and present, between the world which we may know from books alone, and the world upon which our own eyes and ears have been opened. To all Americans who have rounded the half-century cape there exists to-day a Lincoln essentially although perhaps indefinitely different from the Lincoln known to those born since the year of Appomattox. And as long as such Americans shall survive, it will be their sacred obligation to do what they may to keep vital an image which is fast receding into the ghostly realm of legend.

For it is quite clear that mythopoetic forces are already busied with the deeds and the characteristics of the Emanipator, and that the man is fast becoming invested with the attributes of

the tutelary hero and the demigod. The transformation is inevitable, and idealism becomes the gainer from it by so much as reality suffers loss. Every age has thus dealt with the commanding figures of the past which have been singled out as its exemplars. It has been so with Cæsar and Charlemagne, with Dante and Milton. The characters of these men, and of countless others of similarly resounding fame, is figured in our modern consciousness under a guise that would have seemed strange indeed to their contemporaries. So with Lincoln, the new generation is already coming to view him in a light very different from that in which he stood revealed in the days of the nation's fiery trial. The figure of a hero thus recreated by the idealizing instinct of a whole people takes on outlines that bear little relation to the man in his habit as he lived; it reveals, however, with unerring certainty the image of what we would fain believe him to have been. The figure which was in process of reconstruction from the time of Lowell's ode and Whitman's threnody to the time of the statue by Saint-Gaudens, and which is being still more definitely shaped in this centennial year, is far more the expression of our ideal than it is of our memory, and it speaks well for the national character in the twentieth century that this ideal is so pure and wholesome and altogether worthy of our devotion.

"What a piece of work is a man!" What a bewildering complex of acts and moods and impulses and compromises with existence is any given individual, and what insight it requires to disengage the essentials of a character from its many confusing accidents! Perhaps, after all, we may come to have clearer knowledge of a man when his muddy vesture of decay has been cast aside, and time has withdrawn us far from his presence. Do we see the real Lincoln when we read of the country store-keeper, the itinerant lawyer, the petty politician, and the retailer of coarsely humorous anecdote, or do we first really know him when he speaks to us in the Inaugurals and the Gettysburg address? In biography as in history there are many degrees of reality, ranging from the lower to the higher levels, and the sound instinct — particularly the collective instinct — learns in time to discriminate between these various orders of fact, to care little for what is merely trivial and commonplace, to discern the shining life of the spirit as a thing apart from the dull life shaped by material environment. We are still making too much of the lower realities of Lincoln's life

in this memorial season, but time will rectify that miscalculation, and fix our thought more and more fully upon the things which are worthy of immortal remembrance.

The celebration whose echoes are still ringing in our ears has had, like all similar outpourings of feeling, the defects of its qualities. There has been a good deal of splurge about it, a good deal of the perfunctory or insincere, a good deal of empty parade and display of self-seeking. How much of it has been genuine reverence and how much lip-service it would be hard to say; the admixture of the two elements has been obvious enough, although we may not be able to state the proportions. But on the whole, the demonstration has made for good. It has doubtless been the occasion of some soul-searching on the part of men and women, and of much seed-sowing in the minds of the young. To what moral disaster the nation has in recent years forsaken Lincoln's teachings and departed from the example of his life must have been brought home to those who have renewed the study of his career, and out of all this multitude there surely will be some, perhaps there will be many, who will "highly resolve" that he shall not have lived and died in vain, and that the "new birth of freedom" which he helped to give the nation shall be reaffirmed in deed no less than in word. His political principles, now cynically flouted in the high places of our government, and his ideals of social obligation, now made a mockery by predatory and selfish wealth, would soon become controlling influences in our national life if we really meant one-half of what we have been saying during the past week. If our words had purpose behind them, in any sort of proportion to their vehemence and volume, the day of regeneration would be now at hand.

Once more our thoughts go back to that spring day "when lilacs last in the door-yard bloomed," when there was given

"To death's own sightless-seeming eyes a light
Clearer, to death's bare bones a verier might,
Than shines or strikes from any man that lives."

On the last Sunday of his life, Lincoln had read aloud, and, after a pause, repeated these lines from "Macbeth":

"Duncan is in his grave;
After life's fitful fever he sleeps well;
Treason has done his worst: nor steel, nor poison,
Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing
Can touch him further."

A few days later, treason's worst had been done upon him also, and the apotheosis proclaimed

by Stanton's words had become his portion. There is a sense in which we may be glad that death came to him at such a time and in such a manner. His life and death were thus given a unity which appeals to the artist in us; they seem to constitute a tragedy of faultless design. Lincoln would have served his country wisely had he been spared, but perhaps we may say that fate, through the agency of the assassin's weapon, made him the instrument of a better and more enduring service by bestowing upon his career that supreme consecration. No words can be fully adequate to express the significance of such an end as was Lincoln's, but music is always ready to aid us when words fail, and the sublime strains of "Death and Transfiguration" completely interpret for us that transition from life to death, or, as the mystics of all ages have it, from illusion to reality, from death-in-life to life itself, true and everlasting.

EDGAR ALLAN POE: A CENTENARY OUTLOOK.

I.

"The real Poe," writes his latest biographer, "is a simple, intelligible, and, if one may dare say it, a rather insignificant man. To make a hero or a villain of him is to write fiction." And yet to have to wail,

"Romance beside his unstrung lute lies stricken dead," abandoning the legend so long cherished, — this seems too numbing to our sensibilities. Happy the suburbs of sound criticism, where he who mourned Lenore, and told of murders in a Paris street, and brought the gooseflesh to young limbs and old with Ligeia's eeriness and Morella's ghost, is still the Poe who died in hospital after a wild Byronic life, adventurous and perverted; the Poe, in fine, for whom

"The sickness, the nausea,
The pitiless pain,
Have ceased, with the fever
That maddened my brain,
With the fever called 'Living'
That burned in my brain, —"

since now a new and unfamiliar figure has stalked stiff and unasked into our company: a Poe who overworked at book-reviews, and whose worst vice would seem to be a weakness for "superior women." Surely, "we have sold our birthright for a mess of facts!" As Thomas Wentworth Higginson put it long ago: "If Poe fared ill at the hands of his enemy, he has fared worse, on the whole, at those of his friends." For, without failing to establish, with a different emphasis, most of the unpleasant facts recorded but only half-proved by the "perfidious"

Griswold, his later biographers have raised him to a demi-respectability too nearly bourgeois to be poetic, — have deprived him, then, of the companionship of Heine and Musset and Byron, for which he was a candidate. The first man of letters to romanticize his strange unhappy life was Poe himself. It was he who recounted adventures that were never his, in countries that he never visited — in France, in Greece, in Russia even. Taking the cue, his French biographers have hailed in Poe the *poète-névrosé*, the *génie morbide*; Germans have ascribed his productivity to alcoholic epilepsy or to paranoia; but now we needs must read: "The warmth of Bohemia, boulevard mirth, however stimulating to other mad bards of New York and Philadelphia, never fetched a song from him." And it is true! Poe was less a drunkard than we — comforted by the thought that a New England conscience mates not with dark eyes "in a fine frenzy rolling," consoled by our utter respectability for our want of genius — have fondly made him out; and in so far as he was ever drunkard, his craving came from lust of Lethe, or from the insistence of a decadent organism. If alcohol but made Poe ill, then it is clear that here was a poet as dreary in his vice as the rest were in their virtue.

Perhaps there is a moral profit in our seeing the poet stripped of all illusion, — great in spite of his weakness, and not on its account. And yet the letting in of daylight on the dark places of a Rousseau's career, or of a Poe's, seems almost as grievous an offence against æsthetics as the absurdities of pseudo-scientific criticism. The romance spun around Chatterton or our American has been the poesy of those who take their poesy in prose. "I've an idea," wrote Aldrich to Stedman, "that if Poe had been an exemplary, conventional, tax-oppressed citizen, like Longfellow, his few poems, striking as they are, would not have made so great a stir." Cheap as is the quality of fame springing from sentimentalism, if it has brought the heedless crowd under a poet's spell it may be better than truth itself. If one cannot throw the white veil over the passions of a Rousseau in France, a Hearn or a Poe in America, let us ignore the life and look but to the fine achievement. More than once has genius stood distinct from moral greatness, — though we may hold, with Lowell, that all great geniuses have that greatness too. It is an unimportant question, here; for Poe, whatever the personality, was a great artist. There need have been no sully of his memory, or hovering over those last and painful years. "He was never the same again," wrote the gentle Mitchell who has just left us, of the Poe who had lost his Virginia. "We have hardly a right to regard what he did after this — whether in the way of writing, of love-making, or of business projects — as the work of a wholly responsible creature. It were perhaps better if the story of it all had never been told."

Without his finishing touch of dying in the garret, Chatterton would never have come so near to being

